

EMPOWERED BY THE SAME GOD

By Becky Wehrspann, Features Editor

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.
1 Corinthians 12:4-6



For more than 75 years, women of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod have been collecting coins in Mite Boxes, sewing quilts for home and abroad, praying for missionaries, studying God’s Word, mentoring other women, and getting their hands dirty through service projects. Being a Lutheran Woman in Mission means something different to every woman who has done these — or any other number of things — in service to her Lord through the LWML.

The LWML is perhaps more diverse today than it ever has been. Our Heart to Heart Sisters from other countries and cultures are bringing new ideas to societies and congregations all around the U.S. Young women — even teenagers — are getting involved in servant activities and reaching out as missionaries in their own communities. Young mothers are organizing times to meet for Bible study with others outside their congregations. New ideas, fresh perspectives, and increased enthusiasm are breathing life into local groups, zones, and districts. God has planted these young women in places where His Word and Sacrament are celebrated and shared. It is my joy to introduce you to a small cross-section of young women who are answering God’s call in their churches and communities.



Amanda Hankemeier

“You are really fun and have so much energy. You should join LWML.”

I'm not sure if you have ever had a seasoned woman from your church say those words to you, but I was told over and over again that my high energy would be an unmatched asset to my local LWML group. I joined my society in 2012 and found relationships that continue to grow; I have not regretted a moment of the experience. I have served as zone secretary, and I am now the Texas District Young Woman Representative. I recommend taking the plunge to anyone wanting to get involved in her local society. Attend a meeting or two, and get to know the women in the group. If you feel the group does not meet your needs, search for other LWML groups in your area. To continue growing the mission field for LWML, young women must be willing to set out on their own and create new groups to meet the needs of their friends and congregation members.

Seventy-six years ago, brave young women reached out to people in their communities and offered assistance by collecting clothes, equipping hospitals, establishing schools, and assisting orphanages. This was not an easy task then, nor is it now. Many of the missions LWML supports today are tirelessly working for the benefit of the people in the community and for spreading the Love of God. My prayer is that the young women of the LWML would continue this mission and help the LWML celebrate its 150th birthday in 2092. God's people are depending on our dedication to share His Word and work in the mission field.



Ola Odedele

My mom introduced me to the LWML, and I frequently attended and helped at LWML events because of her involvement. I

knew about Mite Boxes, Mustard Seed Devotions, and online Bible studies, but I didn't make my own commitment to LWML until I was chosen as a YWR for the LWML Convention in Albuquerque. Right away, I began attending LWML events at the local, zone, and district levels. Now I get to experience everything firsthand instead of hearing the stories from my mom!

In Albuquerque I most enjoyed getting to know the YWRs from other districts. At convention, I also learned that women didn't lead their own Bible studies until the 1970s! A family member was featured in the history presentation when she and my mom attended their first LWML Convention in Ames, Iowa, in the 1980s.

After seeing all that the LWML does, and learning how conventions are run, I wanted to learn more and bring my own ideas to the LWML. At every level, I want to encourage as many women as possible to participate, whether that's on the local, district or national level, or even all three. I also really want to create opportunities for young women to fellowship and support each other. Often, women say they would like more social activities for women in their church. I want them to recognize the LWML offers this. There is no requirement that a woman attend a minimum number of events or any events at all. Supporting the LWML with mite offerings and prayer for the work of the Lord is just as important.

The LWML motto, and a line from the song, “Serve the Lord with gladness! Glorify His name,” reminds me that everything — every interaction — is a way of serving God, and each should glorify His name. My goal is for people to see Jesus when they look at me. Sometimes I don't succeed, but that is my goal.

“Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!” (Luke 1:45)

STEPPING BACK AND WATCHING GOD LEAD



Carolyn Blum

Having been mentored by many women in the past, I now enjoy encouraging other women to become involved with the LWML, so they, too, can experience the opportunity to serve the Lord with gladness. Most recently, a joy-filled, sparkling, young woman, Kati Meyerhofer, came across my path. A relatively new member of our church, she and her husband quickly became involved in working with our youth. It was fun getting to know them and their young children.

She attended our LWML Women's Guild meetings, listening, learning, and participating. Our older leadership was weary of the roles they handled for so many years, and Kati prayerfully asked several of us (she calls us her "advisory group") if she could offer to be the president. We eagerly agreed, and everyone readily accepted her.

Kati led with tact and thoughtfulness, delegated tasks, and personally asked women to help with projects. Starting slowly so as to retain the best aspects of the existing group, she introduced new ideas such as changing the name of the group to Women in Mission. She also suggested limiting business meetings and using that extra time to work on service projects.

A call went out for plastic bag donations, and sleeping mats were made for the homeless. We had "chocolate night" and "women's night out" at a local restaurant, both events attracting women who had not considered coming to a Women's Guild meeting. Our group hosted a baby shower for a young single mother. We hosted a speaker from Bethesda Lutheran Communities; we're now making clothing

protectors for them. And with each activity, we prayed, had devotions, and sometimes a Bible study.

Once a month, a large Mite Box is placed in the gathering area, with announcements in the worship folder highlighting the current grant being funded. This gives visibility to the LWML and affords congregation members the opportunity to support LWML Mission Grants.

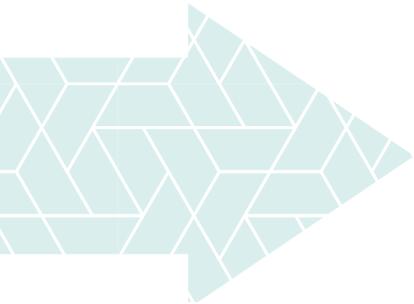
We're no longer the stereotypical "church basement ladies," but rather a sisterhood of friends who play and pray together while supporting missions. Participation, rather than membership, is emphasized.

As I watched Kati work under God's direction, a thought popped into my head: "Introduce her to the larger scope of the LWML — she might like that!" I told her about the scholarship program that our LWML South Wisconsin District developed to encourage more women to attend district retreats and conventions. She filled out the form and received the funding, so I offered her a ride and hesitantly asked if she'd like to be my roommate. (After all, I'm more her mother's age — but she said, "Yes!")

What a joy it was to get to know Kati that weekend! I discovered that she had been baptized and confirmed as an adult and suffered from bouts of depression. Both were surprises, as she was so grounded in her faith and exuded contagious joy with her smile and sparkling eyes. She asked dozens of questions about the LWML, and I encouraged her to mingle with the other young women at the retreat while I enjoyed time with my "older" friends.

Since then, others also have observed her spark, her gifts and talents, and her willingness to share those attributes in serving the Lord through the LWML. She served as the floor manager at our 2018 district convention, doing a superb job even though that was the very first district convention she'd ever attended.

I am praying for Kati and the leadership she exhibits, as well as watching her develop as God's precious child. My role now is to step back, be available to her, pray for her, and wait to see where God leads her. Having been mentored by others, it's a joy for me to now serve as one. Mentoring is very humbling, and I'm grateful to God for this privilege.



“The LWML has given to me something I was missing: a strong connection to God and a desire to help all people in ways I would have never thought of on my own.”

Kati Meyerhofer

My parents both grew up Catholic, but as they got older, they stopped going to church. They didn't want to pick my path for me, so I was not baptized or confirmed as a child, and we didn't go to church unless it was a funeral or wedding. We did celebrate Christmas and Easter, and I knew who Jesus was, but only the basics.

I met my husband, Zack, at Marquette University, a Catholic college. He was raised LCMS but was not involved in a church during his college years. After he asked me to marry him, his mother asked me to be baptized and confirmed before our wedding. I was a little taken back, but as my faith was growing, I knew it was the next step.

While we were looking for a church home as well as a church to be married in, we visited Divine Savior in Hartford, Wisconsin, and felt very welcome. We talked to the pastor about joining and being married there. I was baptized and confirmed in Spring 2007. We were married on April 26, 2008.

Shortly after we were married, we had to move in with my parents, in West Allis, Wisconsin. I was really struggling with being a wife and daughter at the same time under the same roof. I ended up in a severe depression and attempted to take my life. Once I hit rock bottom, I realized I needed help. We continued to go to church in Hartford, which was about a 45-minute commute each way, but I didn't understand the importance of prayer and truly relying on God. I began counseling and meeting with our pastor. Zack and I worked through it and, with the help of God, I am here today.

As I started to feel more comfortable in the church, I went to LWML meetings. The society president was thinking about stepping down, but no one wanted to take her place. I prayed and asked God to direct me. I approached a few women and mentioned I would be interested in leading but would need some help. One of those women was Carolyn Blum. She took me under her wing and helped me understand what the LWML was all about. At the time



I knew very little of how active she had been, and still is, within the LWML on a district and national level. She started by providing me a link to where I could find the leadership materials online. She wanted to show what the LWML was, so she invited me to the 2016 South Wisconsin Winter Retreat. I really started to understand what the LWML was about on a larger scale and my enthusiasm grew, so I applied to be a YWR to the 2017 Albuquerque LWML Convention.

At the convention, I felt a fire growing inside me. I now really understood the LWML and what the mission was. I took that excitement back to my congregation and made some changes. With the blessing of the women who were helping me, we stopped having a business meeting every month. Instead, we have a speaker, a fun night for fellowship, or work on service projects. Since making the changes, our monthly meetings have increased in size and we are continuing to plan new events.

I am co-chair for our 2019 Winter Retreat and the chair for the 2020 Winter Retreat. I attended the Assembly of Leaders training in November 2018 and will be part of the committee that will be training the leaders and women in our district.

Becoming involved in the LWML has given me a different sense of purpose, allowing me to use the talents I didn't know I had, and giving me time to focus on our Lord. I feel so much more connected to God and recharged and rejuvenated in my faith. The LWML has given to me something I was missing: a strong connection to God and a desire to help all people in ways I would have never thought of on my own.

Learn more about Kati's journey in the Summer 2019 issue of the LWQ.

Carolyn Zimmerman

I find it quite interesting to hear what people remember about certain dates or events. When you ask “What was your first experience in LWML?” the answers will be as unique as the individuals asked. Even if you ask individuals involved in a single event, most likely you’ll get more than one story.

For instance, if you asked my grandmother, “What was Carolyn’s first experience in LWML?” she might tell you about when I was a YWR at a district convention. Or perhaps she’d tell you about the three times we served for the Alaska Mission for Christ together. Maybe she’d still be beaming that I attended Assembly of Leaders last November and tell you about that. Or, maybe she thinks my experience with LWML was when I became a zone president. All of these are wonderful, extremely memorable events that could be fascinating first experiences with LWML.

But, if you ask me, my first experience with LWML was far less glamorous or adventurous. Even though my grandmother and I were both there, we remember things differently.

I remember her kitchen vividly. She had low-pile brown carpet with dark cabinetry and a Formica® counter top. There was an island in the middle and the sink was on the wall under a window. Grandma had a small, crystal hummingbird suction-cupped to that window that would make rainbows when the morning sun rose. And on the sill, she always had a tiny little cardboard box. A.L.W.A.Y.S.

While sitting at the island eating Club® crackers and Kraft® cheese slices — a snack I only enjoyed at Grandma’s — I asked her about that funny little box. She explained to me what “mites” were. When I sit back, close my eyes, and think of that afternoon, I can still plainly hear her say, “If we all put in a little, we might end up with a lot.” I can see her soft curly, gray hair. I can smell the room. I can feel her tender heart.

When I open my eyes, reality comes flooding back to me. My kids are noisy. I think my coffee might have burned, and I still need to make breakfast. I have no idea how busy my grandma was that day or if my kind of chaos may have been ensuing in her reality. Considering I was at her house, she hardly was able to sit back and relax.

Amid whatever was going on, she took the time to talk to a 5-year old about the tiny cardboard box and all that it means for the LWML. And many years later, that moment is engrained in my memory.

I doubt my grandma expects this to be my answer. Honestly, I doubt she’ll remember the specific conversation. I have no idea if I’ve ever been someone’s first experience with the LWML — or if I ever will be. But my prayer is that should the time come when it is my turn to share the Gospel through the seemingly mundane, I’ll serve my Lord with gladness. Just like my grandma did.



“My prayer is that should the time come when it is my turn to share the Gospel through the seemingly mundane, I’ll serve my Lord with gladness. Just like my grandma did.”



Mary Buddenberg

Mary lives in the Mid-South District and was one of eight from her congregation who attended the 75th Anniversary

LWML Convention in Albuquerque. She

is a college junior, working on a Bachelor's

Degree in Special Education at the University of Central Arkansas, Conway, and an active member of Peace Lutheran Church.

Working with Peace LWML, middle schoolers of the congregation, and Karen Carter, Bethesda Auxiliary President, Mary is currently leading the Bethesda Birthday Boxes project. Boxes are filled with cake mix, frosting, candles, plates, napkins, homemade birthday cards and, as funds allow, a small gift.

The project is an opportunity for spiritual growth and enrichment to all who volunteer. It involves the congregation and youth in disability ministry, and provides an easy, fun, purposeful, and Christ-centered celebration for the person of the day. Delivery of the first set of 53 boxes to Cypress, Texas, took place in December 2017. (See news story on page 22.)

Mary became involved in LWML to stay involved in her church. "My mom and our LWML president invited me to their meetings, and I have attended several since. I spoke about the birthday boxes to our LWML, and our women support me with open arms and donations."

"I loved the convention in Albuquerque! I enjoyed the fact that it was mostly all women and about learning all that LWML does. I now understand where my mite offerings go, as well as enjoying the fellowship with members of Peace."

The Bethesda Auxiliary says that the Birthday Box Project is just beginning: "We hope to provide these boxes in all 13 states where Bethesda supports people with intellectual and developmental disabilities." Learn more at: www.bethesdalca.org.

Laura Davis Hemminger

My dad is a Lutheran pastor and my mom is a Lutheran teacher, so they taught me from an early age the importance of sharing my faith and looking to the Gospel for answers to difficult questions. They also didn't hide the truth about what those difficult questions were. As I got older and learned more about life and death, the more I felt the urging from the Holy Spirit to do something to help.

It wasn't until I got involved with Lutherans For Life, though, that I truly understood the connection between the Gospel and Life issues. People generally see Life issues as political or social issues, but I have learned they are primarily spiritual issues. Life comes under threat, whether at the beginning of life or the end of life, when life is devalued. Life is devalued when people don't understand where the value of life comes from. It doesn't come from our abilities, our accomplishments, or our physical characteristics. Rather, it comes from the Gospel.

Isaiah 43:1 says: *But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine."* We are created by God, redeemed by the blood of Jesus, and called according to the Holy Spirit. This is the message we need to hear, and this is the message I have been called to share through Y4Life.

Working with Y4Life, the youth and young adult program at Lutherans for Life, I have the privilege of mentoring young men and women, teaching them how to share the truth in love through education and service opportunities. I have seen these students save lives, change hearts, and above all else, witness to what God has done to give ALL life value. I pray that God will continue to give us the opportunity to witness to those who need to hear most that life has value, even when it is difficult.

You can learn more about Laura's involvement with Y4Life on page 14 and at the Mobile LWML Convention where she will be a Mites in Action speaker!



Priscilla Daryaie

I am a Christian and a woman of color. I am bilingual in English and Spanish. I'm a mother of a grown daughter and son. I'm a sister to three brothers and a trusted friend to many. I am a 20-year banking professional and leader. I have served as a volunteer for many causes. Above all, I am a child of God.

I was born and raised in Southern California by my mother, Angelina Jauregui, an American of Mexican heritage from Texas, and my father, Oscar Cifuentes, from Colombia, South America. Through their examples, I learned the importance of faith in God, family, hard work, love, laughter, respect, and helping others.

From the very beginning, I was surrounded by God and family. We attended church every Sunday. I loved God as a child and learned how to pray. After my parents divorced, I became a member of the youth group and was confirmed at Trinity Lutheran Church in Whittier, California. As a young adult, I formed a youth group for 13- to 19-year olds at St. John's Lutheran Church, Montebello, California. I also helped with Vacation Bible School. It felt good to be active in my church, but life's hardships and trials wore me down and tested my faith. Through all this time my mother was my strongest mentor in Christ. Her words of godly wisdom and her constant encouragement to remain in church have always brought me back to St. John's. My mom's tireless efforts in doing God's work has never ceased to amaze me. Through her efforts, along with the members of the Spanish congregation, I have been inspired to get more involved in the church. But the fear of not living up to their expectations and not knowing my own purpose often held me back.

Attending the LWML Convention in Albuquerque as a Heart to Heart (H2H) Sister was life changing. It was my first introduction to diversity in the LWML. My favorite part was meeting Lutheran women from all over the world. I was so inspired by each woman's story and the collective ideas we brought to the table. In praising, praying, and hearing testimonies of God's work with my fellow H2H Sisters and the women of LWML, I shared a wonderful, God-given unity that will forever bond us.

I returned from Albuquerque with joy in my heart, a desire to share my story, and an inspiration to serve. This inspiration led me, with several others, to plan and organize our LWML rally. We invited women from multiple congregations to come together to worship, hear mission stories, sing praises, and raise funds for mite offerings. We auctioned donated gift baskets from our congregation, raising \$400 toward our mite goal. I've been blessed with the opportunity to volunteer my time, share my talents, and teach Bible school in my church. I am grateful to the LWML for their mission of reaching out to others and encouraging me to use my gifts to serve the Lord.

All of you are part of the same body. There is only one Spirit of God, just as you were given one hope when you were chosen to be God's people. We have only one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. There is one God who is the Father of all people. Not only is God above all others, but he works by using all of us, and he lives in all of us.

Ephesians 4:4-6 (CEV)



Nicole Knutson

My passion for LWML started during my deaconess internship at Grace Lutheran Church in San Mateo, California. The Pastor and Delores Keim (my “house mom”) strongly encouraged me to participate in the society, and I’m glad they did. The fellowship and encouragement we found together in God’s Word strengthened me during that time. I was also able to serve as a bridge between the women in church and those who were homebound and could no longer attend. At their encouraging, I served as delegate for our district convention. After my internship, I was active in LWML societies in Santa Rosa, California; Spokane, Washington; Cullman, Alabama; and Fort Wayne, Indiana. Even though each LWML was vastly different, they all were centered on their love of Jesus and reliance on God’s Word. This commonality helped me feel at home, no matter where we moved.

When my husband received his Call to St. John Lutheran Church in McMinnville, Oregon, we started our dual ministry, he as the Pastor and I as Volunteer Deaconess. I serve as Christian life leader for the St. John LWML society and vice president of special focus ministries for Oregon District. My husband recently became pastoral counselor for the Pacific Zone in the Oregon District.

Our love for our Lord is something we celebrate with the other women in LWML meetings and events — where Lutheran women of all ages serve to extend God’s Word and God’s work to all people throughout the world. As servants in Christ, we are thankful for the work we do together through the LWML.



Ashley Tieman

As a young girl in Houston, Texas, my mom told me stories about missionaries. We collected special Christmas offerings, wrote letters to, and prayed for missionary families. I began to dream of being a missionary when I grew up. The Lord refined that dream into a passion and, through His Spirit, drew my eyes to Asia. When I met my husband, Nicholas, and learned that he, too, desired to share the Word, we began to dream of missionary life together.

Our dreams were realized in 2009 when we moved to Yunnan, China, to teach English. Among the hundreds of students we taught that year, a few grew close to us and came into our home for Bible study.

In 2010, we became English teachers in rural Japan alongside a permanent missionary couple. Although we faced many challenges, those years were full of blessings. I participated in Bible studies, hosted cooking exchange parties, helped prepare for worship and the fellowship dinners that followed, and served as a substitute teacher for the mission conversation school.

During our years abroad, the LWML society of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Memphis, Tennessee, sent us several care packages. Although I had never met these women in person, they showered us with snacks, language learning resources, magazines, school supplies, and cards. When we moved to Memphis in 2013, I was determined to find these “purple women” who had been so generous to us. When I discovered LWML was about serving the Lord through mission and service, I knew I wanted to be involved.

I have served as a district and national YWR, as district YWR chairman, a district mission grants committee member, zone treasurer, and Christian Life chairman for my society. I love serving with LWML — through the faithful service of each woman helping where she is able, the Lord blesses her efforts and joins her together with other Lutheran women throughout the world to bring Christ to the nations.

I now live in the United States, but I am still a missionary. I cultivate friendships with Japanese people in Memphis and invite them into our home. My husband and I are very active in our church. I spend my days educating my two children, not just how to do math or spelling, but also about the Triune God and His grace, the Savior who came and died so that through Him, people from all nations can stand *before the throne and before the Lamb ... crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”* (Revelation 7:9-10).

“When I discovered LWML was about serving the Lord through mission and service, I knew I wanted to be involved.”

Amanda Williams and Alli Bauck

Amanda Williams' journey with the LWML started in 2013 when Ella, a church friend and mentor, encouraged her to apply as a Kansas District YWR for the Pittsburgh LWML Convention. Amanda was not chosen but was encouraged to apply for the 2014 district convention the next year. She was accepted as one of the Kansas City CrossRoads Zone YWRs. It was at this convention that Amanda met Alli Bauck. Alli was the other CrossRoads Zone YWR and was already well known to the Kansas LWML community, thanks to the involvement of her mom, grandma, aunt, and great aunt. Amanda's first experiences with LWML were through her grandmother and the Ladies Aids at her churches growing up in Minnesota and South Dakota. In Kansas City, Amanda didn't really know anyone in her area, except those at her own church.

Amanda and Alli became fast friends, finding many things in common between the two of them: both were about the same age, met their husbands in college, had similar hobbies, and each had a set of kittens — one orange and the other black. Alli is quiet, organized, thoughtful, and enjoys being creative. Amanda's outgoing personality gives her joy to be in front of a crowd, getting people together or leading a group. By the end of their weekend together, God had put it on their hearts to start their own LWML group. Each one attended a different church in the CrossRoads Zone, where they knew there were other young women who were interested in a young women's group. They set out to create a new group especially for these young women.

Eight women came, representing three different churches! They joined in discussion about what this group would look like and shared what LWML was all about. They named their group *Eve Circle*, because it was one of the first of its kind and they were young like Eve.

Amanda and Alli sent invitations to all the area LCMS congregations. Their first meeting was held at a local coffee shop one Sunday evening. Eight women came, representing three different churches! They joined in discussion about what this group would look like and shared what LWML was all about. They named their group *Eve Circle*, because it was one of the first of its kind and they were young like Eve. In the first year they gathered monthly for fellowship, Bible study, and ministry projects. They created a Facebook group so they could communicate and get to know one another better. What the young women craved most was fellowship time and Bible study. Each year the group selects a Bible study to do together. So far they have enjoyed (and highly recommend): *Ruth: More than a Love Story*; *Sip, Savor, and Drink Deeply*; *Soul Spa*; and *Demystifying the Proverbs 31 Woman*.

The women of *Eve Circle* designed and handcrafted sunflower pins for the 2015 Des Moines LWML Convention, where they were also recognized by President Kay. In 2016, the Kansas District recognized them as their own society. In addition to the friendships they've built, in the last year seven of them have become first-time moms and two of them have gotten married! *Eve Circle* currently has 12 active members, representing four churches. It is exciting to witness God's work as He continues to bless the *Eve Circle* gatherings and grow its young women closer together as sisters in Christ, in the Kansas City area.





Tiffany Harkins

Tiffany Harkins is a public school teacher who loves

her job and her students and is intentional about sharing the love of

Jesus. She became a member of the LCMS at Beautiful Savior in Olathe, Kansas, in 2005, after marrying her high school sweetheart. She began attending Bible study but didn't realize it was part of the church's LWML society until Eden Keefe invited Tiffany to apply to be a YWR at the 2006 Kansas District convention. She came home with her own Mite Box, hooked on the mission of the LWML.

Since that first convention experience, Tiffany has been involved in the LWML at the local, district, and even national level. In 2014 she joined the newly formed Eve Circle (see Amanda and Alli's story on page 10) designed to bring young women together from different congregations across the Kansas City CrossRoads Zone.

Tiffany has been blessed to attend every district convention since her YWR experience in 2006.

She has served on the member development committee (now special focus ministries) and currently chairs the christian life committee.

In 2012, Tiffany applied for and was selected as a Kansas District YWR for the 2013 LWML Convention in Pittsburgh. She loved seeing the passionate service during the servant events and ingathering collections and was deeply moved by the Mites in Action speakers.

She was thrilled to be invited to dress as Marty the Mosquito for the Malaria Project at the block party! It was a relief to hear President Kay give the YWRs "permission" to do things differently. When Tiffany arrived home, she asked her husband to please do whatever it took with the budget to enable her to always attend national conventions, and she is grateful to have been able to attend each national convention since. A highlight and delight was learning so much LWML history at the special 75th Anniversary Diamond Dazzle celebration!

Tiffany does not know what other plans God has for her inside and outside the LWML but trusts in His plan for her life. She is passionate about the mission of the LWML and will continue to serve the Lord with gladness as long as she is able.



Ali Arndt

I have been a part of the LWML as long as I can remember: I sat with my dad when he would lead devotions as the pastor; I went to circle meetings with my mom when I got older; and I served as page for the North Dakota District convention. I was then asked to apply to be the Young Woman Representative in Albuquerque.

I was privileged to serve as a YWR and was amazed at all the women who serve, joyfully spreading the Gospel and supporting others with their mite offerings. I was most inspired by the history of the LWML, which made me see LWML in a new light. I was excited to share what I had learned and could not wait to get started.

I approached our LWML group with my ideas, and they were excited and willing to support me. First, they joined with Vocational Training Center, an agency I work for that serves adults with disabilities, by inviting some of the individuals to come sew with them.

Then, in the fall of 2017, I asked some young women in our church to do a Bible study. We decided to meet on Friday nights, and Larissa Brelje, a YWR from the Pittsburgh LWML Convention, and her mom helped get things set up. Six women attended the first Bible study, and we really enjoyed the fellowship and time in God's Word. I invited others to join, and the group grew. Each month we shared more about LWML and the missions and, in June, our Bible study group asked if we could join LWML as our own circle. It has been such a blessing to see the relationships developing between the young and old.

The Lord continues to call me to serve, and this last fall I was invited to join the Assembly of Leaders training. I am excited to use what I have learned to continue to share the love of Christ with others.

"I was most inspired by the history of the LWML, which made me see LWML in a new light."



Bonnie Karch and Elizabeth Cross

As a teacher and a District President, I find much of my time is spent mentoring and encouraging my students and fellow LWML sisters. I've never intentionally sought out anyone until the Lord blessed me with the opportunity to mentor a young woman in my church.

One Sunday, Elizabeth asked me what I was carrying in my package. I didn't know her well, although I had seen her occasionally around the church. I told her my bag contained craft supplies from my monthly Ladies Craft Day. She asked more about it and if she could attend. Neither of us had any idea of God's plan as we laughed, talked, and made lots of silly greeting cards. Many of the women there talked about LWML activities, and Elizabeth began to ask questions. Before she left, I invited her to our next LWML event.

Elizabeth was so excited to hear what was going on in LWML and wanted to know more about all aspects of it: society, zone, district, and national; mite offerings; H2H Sisters; YWRs; and how she could help. I eagerly encouraged her to join our next event, where she was an enthusiastic and willing worker.

Our zone invited her to the 2018 district convention. She had so many questions, and I made sure to answer them all. By the end of convention, she was charged up and ready to become more involved in the LWML ministry. Praise the Lord!

At the end of summer, our society held elections and she became our new society president. She made me promise to guide her and answer all her questions. She hit the ground running with all kinds of ideas for outreach. I made sure I never used the words, "We've never done it that way before," unless I finished with, "but it sounds like a great idea that we should try!"

I started our annual Holiday Craft Bazaar 15 years ago but had to miss last fall because I was attending the Assembly of Leaders Training in St. Louis. I asked Elizabeth and my daughter, Krista, to help in my absence. Imagine my surprise when I returned home to hear them tell me they already had new ideas for the next bazaar that will make it even better, and they were going to run it together (without me)! They even made changes to the instructions in my official Bazaar Notebook! What a great feeling to see them eagerly embrace these new opportunities in the LWML.

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Elizabeth has become more confident and enthusiastic and involved in other church areas. She joined our Bible study group as we worked our way through Donna Pyle's *Abundance of Love* study. She has also become a Lay Minister and serves with passion and encourages others to become involved in reaching out.

Due to health issues, Elizabeth doesn't drive, so her mother is her chauffeur. The added blessing is that her mother has also become active in LWML and Bible study. My greatest joy is watching Elizabeth grow in confidence as she becomes more involved. It's a blessing for me to help pass the work of the LWML to the next generation. I pray that the Lord will bless me with more young women to encourage and mentor as they begin their journey in LWML.



Dawn Zerkel

Have you ever read the book *Oh! The Places You'll Go!* by Dr. Seuss? I feel that is my journey with the LWML.

I started out going to a meeting one Monday evening not knowing what to expect. The president asked me to attend the district convention in Bloomington, Illinois, as both delegate and a Young Woman Representative. Patti Ross (now LWML President), encouraged me to apply to be a national YWR. I was intrigued; however, it still took a couple weeks before I filled it out and sent it in.

I was accepted to be the YWR from my district to the Sioux Falls LWML Convention in 2007.

I got to Sioux Falls overwhelmed. I was showered with gifts; I felt like part of the LWML “royalty.” We were kept busy, morning until night.

YWRs share a special bond or sisterhood within the LWML. We were told we are the future (the now!) of LWML, and this frightened me. We were also told “God does not send the equipped, He equips the ones He sends.”

After my return, I served in my zone, then became Christian life chairman for the district. I am now vice president of Christian life where I serve with six of my fellow YWRs.

I am also serving on the LWML Information Technology Committee. It is exciting to see the places God sent me, and I can't wait to see where my journey with God and LWML will take me next.



MeiChun Lin

I was born in southeast China, where people worship all kinds of gods, goddesses, and even their ancestors. My mom is considered to have Immortals' Bones, which is called *Xiangu* in Chinese. People with Immortals' Bones are said to be able to communicate with spirits and dead people.

I was very sick when I was 19 years old and a “witch” said I was also one gifted with Immortals' Bones. The witch suggested I become a witch, work in a temple, and worship a goddess in my house for the rest of my life in order to stay away from misfortunes. The thought of becoming a witch, working in a temple, or worshipping a goddess for my whole life made me scared.

In my senior year of college, a Christian friend told me that Jesus had freed me from my sins and all I needed to do was simply to believe in Him. These words touched my heart. My family had undergone lots of ups and downs because of these so-called spirits with their blessings or curses. I had no desire to serve these spirits. I was baptized in 2011, the year I graduated from college.

I came to the United States to study for my M.Ed in 2012 and was confirmed as a Lutheran in 2013. I later met my husband, Zach, at church. His mother, the president of our local LWML, introduced us.

I am serving as a Mandarin teacher for 7th–11th grade students at a private school in Idaho. I taught Vacation Bible School and shared my faith story at the Utah-Idaho District convention. I have been working with Pastor Christian Zimmermann, who is also an author, to translate his Bible story book from English into Chinese.

I have grown a lot in my faith since 2011 when I was baptized. I got baptized to escape my ancestry of serving the spirits with my Immortals' Bones, but not because I truly knew God at that time. Since then, I've learned to trust God, and I keep growing strong in my faith gradually. He has answered my prayers, and I never question that God is with me in all situations. One of my favorite, simple daily prayers is, “God, don't forget me if I forget you today.”

God loves all His children regardless of their language, color, and background. Knowing brothers and sisters from diversified cultures is a wonderful chance to witness how His powerful love prevails in every corner of the world. As a Heart to Heart Sister, I was thrilled to meet the other sisters from various backgrounds at the Albuquerque LWML Convention. It encouraged me when they shared how they serve God in their own communities.

“It is exciting to see the places God sent me and I can't wait to see where my journey with God and LWML will take me next.”